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FUNDAMENTAL RESULTS OF THE TWELFTH ALL-UNION CONGRESS OF HYGIENISTS, EPIDEMIOLOGISTS, MICROBIOLOGISTS, AND INFECTION SPECIALISTS

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Moscow

"Much effort is still required to liberate mankind from many diseases, but science will attain this goal. And it will be mainly the result of prophylaxis and the development of hygiene." -- I. Mechnikov

Soviet public health and medical science has accumulated, especially in recent years, much knowledge and experience. In the light of the tremendous importance of the problems connected with the natural growth of the population because of an increase in the birth rate and a further decrease of total and infant mortality, the character of the state and the advanced principles of Soviet public health stand out in even greater relief, uncovering new horizons for medical science and practice.

The Twelfth All-Union Congress of Hygienists, Epidemiologists, Microbiologists, and Infection Specialists, held in Moscow from 13 to 20 October 1947, met after a 19-year interruption. The decisions of the congress undoubtedly will represent in themselves an important landmark in the subsequent development of preventive techniques in Soviet medicine, and will serve as valuable guide material for the organization of sanitation and epidemiological work. The program of the congress, which included 98 papers, concerned the fundamental problems of hygiene and epidemiology, immunology, and clinical practice foreseen by the Fourth Stalin Five-Year Plan. A considerable part of the discussions of the congress was devoted to the problems of the eradication of the sanitation and epidemic consequences of the war (papers of N. A. Semashko, L. V. Gromashevskiy, A. N. Marseyev, T. E. Boldyrev, and others).

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The widely expanded restoration of towns and villages after the war, the development of new industrial centers, and the tremendous growth of the number of industrial undertakings demanded vigorous creative activity in hygienic science.

The material presented for consideration by the congress, in the basic papers as well as in the numerous speeches, characterized the direction in which problems of hygiene and epidemiology are being developed at the present time. The scientific reports of institutes touched upon problems of the rational planning of settled places, of the sanitation of air and reservoirs, of improvement in every way of the conditions of labor, and of the search for new, more effective means of prophylaxis in controlling various diseases.

At the plenary sessions of the congress, 24 basic papers were heard and discussed. The first group of papers was devoted to one of the most important contemporary problems of public health -- the unification of the sanitation and epidemiological organization.

The papers of the Member of the Academy of Medical Sciences, Professor F. G. Krotkov, on the problems of hygiene and epidemiology in the Fourth Five-Year Plan, and of the Deputy Minister of Public Health of the RSFSR, Professor V. A. Ryazanov, on the formation and training of the sanitation and epidemiological cadres, threw some light upon the fundamental problems of the reorganization of the state sanitation inspection, and indicated the more important measures for strengthening the sanitation and epidemiological work of the organs of public health.

The congress noted that a basic fault in the organization of sanitation and epidemiological work is the independent work of the sanitation doctors (state sanitation inspectors) and the epidemiologists. Even at this date primitive control methods have prevailed in the work of the state sanitation inspection and the epidemiological organization. The government sanitation inspectors and epidemiologists are not yet genuine organizers of broad sanitation measures. A sanitation technical bias stands out distinctly in the theoretical work of the hygienists as well as in the practical work of the sanitation and epidemiological organization. Without denying the importance of technique in the matter of the organization of sanitation measures, the congress particularly emphasized the leading role of investigations of sanitation conditions of the population in the broadest sense of the word. The sanitation doctor must become the initiator and organizer of broad sanitation measures in the field of his activity. The work of the organs of the state sanitation inspection must be reorganized in the direction of increased attention to preventive sanitation supervision.

Having approved the measures of the Ministry of Public Health of the USSR on the unification of the sanitation and epidemiological organization, the congress declared its approval of the greatest possible strengthening of the sanitation and epidemiological station as a supporting base for local work. /On 1 January 1947, there were 3,826 sanitation and epidemiological stations in the USSR, including 2,037 urban and 1,789 rural stations. There were 6,350 doctors and 24,389 medical workers on duty at the stations./ For this purpose the sanitation and epidemiological stations must be assured of laboratories, transportation, and qualified personnel. Each station must have within its frame-work a sanitation and epidemiological section, a section of sanitation statistics, a section of sanitation education, a laboratory, an inoculation department, and department for disinfection. The congress acknowledged that interregional sanitation and epidemiological stations, and branch industrial sanitation stations, etc., were impracticable.

Theoretical training of personnel and the objectives of their practical activity have a decisive effect on the improvement of all sanitation work.

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In this respect an exceptionally great responsibility falls upon the medical institutes, particularly upon the sanitation teaching staff, which is called upon to mold the medical thinking of the doctor. The development of correct medical thinking in future doctors, and the development of a correct world-view in future practitioners of medicine must become an indispensable requisite in the education and training of cadres.

Like practicing physicians and sanitation doctors, epidemiologists must also remember that the object of their everyday activity which should receive their constant care and attention is the preservation of the health of human beings. Environmental conditions (air, soil, water), labor conditions, etc., must be the object of study of hygienists and epidemiologists insofar as they effect human beings. Professor Krotkov in his paper justly condemned hygienists who have forgotten this basic requirement. Hygienic science, Professor Krotkov pointed out, was separated from physiology and pathophysiology; external environment (pollution and purification of water, aerosols, radiations, etc.) have taken the place of human beings in the scientific work of hygiene institutes. Professor Krotkov cited examples of prominent hygienists assiduously studying wool and cotton fabrics with an energy that might be directed to a better use, forgetting that human beings do not wear fabrics, but clothing sewn from them. Because of such misconceptions of the problems, soil hygiene has been converted into soil science, food hygiene into sanitation science of staple commodities, and communal hygiene into sanitation technique. Such tendencies must be countered with an hygienic science that works out its problems not independently of human beings, but from their interests, and from an understanding of the peculiarities of the physiological and pathophysiological processes that occur in the human organism. "The separation of hygiene from the human organism, or the dissolution of its organic connection with medicine, can have very grievous consequences for the further correct development of hygienic knowledge," warned Fedor Fedorovich Erisman more than half a century ago.

Sanitation doctors and epidemiologists must possess a method for studying the sanitation conditions of the population, must organize a properly records of morbidity, and must be capable of evaluating correctly the effectiveness of epidemiological and, particularly, mass sanitation measures. Scientific institutes are obligated to aid in every way the practitioners of the sanitation and epidemiological organization in this extremely important work. Rational sanitation and epidemiological measures can be undertaken only on the basis of concrete analyses of the data on the birth rate, morbidity, mortality, composition, and movement of the population.

A great deal of the time of the congress was given over to the discussion of problems of planning the restoration of populated places and the purification of the air. The papers of Z. G. Frenkel', E. A. Bragin, K. A. Beryushev, Z. K. Mogilevchik, R. A. Babayanets, and E. K. Ugryumova dealt thoroughly with these questions. It was particularly emphasized in their reports that up to the present, the voice of the sanitation doctor-hygienist has barely been heard in solving the problems of building cities and obtaining good sanitation in populated places.

Scientific institutes and practical sanitation workers still fall far short of properly upholding the sanitation and hygiene requirements which would safeguard the health of the population in the restoration and development of populated places.

The congress spoke in favor of the concentration of all scientific forces of the nation for the solution of the most important hygienic problems. It also took note of the exceptionally slow tempo of translating scientific results into practice. Scientific programs of institutes must include the solution of problems for the establishment of precise indices of the sanitation condition of various soils of populated places and the processes of self-purifica-

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tion, a hygienic evaluation of new methods of purification and the technical trends of sanitation, and the analysis of the effectiveness of measures for sanitation in the light of the concrete problems of the struggle with intestinal diseases.

The decree of the Council of Ministers of the USSR of 31 May 1947, "Concerning Measures for the Control of Pollution and the Protective Sanitation of Water Sources," demands from sanitation organs much more attention to the study of harmful factors influencing the health and sanitation conditions of the population. A gap exists between conducting these investigations and the tempo of development of industry. The backwardness of science in developing protective sanitation of reservoirs must be corrected as quickly as possible.

The congress noted the great importance of sanitation protection of reservoirs for the control of water-borne infections; in this, as in many other problems, the joint work of hygienists, microbiologists, and epidemiologists is an indispensable requisite.

It was also noted in the decisions of the congress that the threat of epidemics of airborne diseases (grippe, children's diseases, and others) demands a vigorous search for quick and effective methods of disinfecting air in dwellings and public buildings. The expediency of using ultraviolet rays and other physical agents in public buildings, and methods of mass disinfections was noted. "The congress, placing great importance upon the solution of the problem of effective prophylaxis of airborne infections by means of air sanitation, considers it imperative that material and technical means be provided for further study of this problem."

A large part of the program of the congress was given over to problems of food, school, and labor hygiene. Soviet hygiene has achieved considerable successes in solving the problems of labor hygiene. The attention of the congress was directed to the necessity of controlling silicosis. The urgent problems in this connection are: the pathogenesis of this disease, early diagonsis, the development of more thorough means of investigation of the atmosphere, and a search for the best methods of dust elimination, especially in mining operations.

The congress also noted the tremedous importance of scientific solutions of the hygienic problems of agricultural labor.

Problems of immunity and prophylactic inoculation stimulated tremendous interest among the participants of the congress. The papers of Professors L. A. Zil'ber, P. F. Zdrodovskiy, V. M. Berman, V. K. Beletskiy, N. N. Zhukov-Berezhnikov, N. N. Ginsburg, Dr N. I. Aleksandrov, and others were devoted to these most important problems of contemporary epidemiology and microbiology.

In recent years, a number of scientific investigations have been very successfully carried out by Soviet immunologists on general studies of the effectiveness of preventive inoculations, which indicate the road to further improvement and optimum application. As noted by the congress, outstanding importance is attached to the works of Soviet investigators on living vaccines, and also studies and use in epidemiological practice of vaccines of a new type from "pure antigens." The results achieved in this field permitted the congress to note with particular satisfaction the "originality and the trend of Soviet immunology in the development of prophylactic inoculation."

Prophylactic inoculation occupies an important place in the system of epidemiological measures. Hence, the interest aroused by the paper of Professor Zdrodovskiy on the role of prophylactic inoculations in the control of disease is completely understandable. The present state of immunology and the exceptional success attained by public health organs in the control of disease very urgently demands some reconsideration of the problem of using

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prophylactic inoculations.

Inoculations are the basic measures in the control of diphtheria, and play a subordinate role in controlling intestinal infections.

Generalizing the accumulated data on this most important division of epidemiology and microbiology, the congress, with the objective of understanding the quality and effectiveness of inocula, recommended:

1. Assurance of an intensive scientific effort to solve the problem of living vaccines that can be used for prophylaxis, first of all concerning prophylaxis of those infections where there are possibilities for success (measles, exanthematous typhus, brucellosis, etc.).

2. Organization of work on all phases of study of the problem of chemical vaccines from pure antigens.

3. Striving for every possible improvement in the quality of corpuscular vaccines of the intestinal group in conformance with the level of contemporary immunology, and the introduction of a quantitative evaluation of their immunogenicity.

4. Organization of all phases of study of the pathogenesis of postinfections immunogenicity in bacillary dysentery to achieve the best solution to the problem of inoculations against this infection.

5. Assurance of the development of research for producing the most effective preparations for children's diseases.

The congress particularly emphasized the importance of general sanitation measures in the struggle with intestinal diseases.

A number of interesting papers (V. L. Ol'shevskaya, V. I. Ioffe, and others) were devoted to the problem of scarlet fever. The congress noted the originality of the investigations of Soviet scholars on the study of the etiology, immunology, epidemiology, and clinical practice of scarlet fever.

One of the basic problems of the postwar Five-Year Plan in the field of public health is the control of parasitic typhus. The congress again noted the possession of all necessary prerequisites for the rapid realization of this goal. Having confirmed the role and significance of early and complete hospitalization of patients, of medical treatment, and of subsequent observation at home, the congress pointed out the necessity for the materialization of feasible plans for the control of parasitic typhus with the maintenance of records of all local conditions mandatory.

The Minister of Public Health of the USSR, E. I. Smirnov, took an active part in the proceedings of the congress. In his introductory paper, devoted to the thirtieth anniversary of Soviet public health, and in his subsequent speech on the scheduled problems of the congress, the Minister particularly emphasized the importance of the unity of the sanitation and epidemiological organizations, and the exceptional role of the measures being taken at the present time by the Ministry of Public Health for an increase in the quality of medical aid to the population, and the elevation of the entire medico-sanitation profession to a higher level.

The proceedings of the congress were participated in by 1,594 persons, including 1,157 delegates and 397 guests. All the republics of the Soviet Union were represented: RSFSR, 820; Ukrainian SSR, 201; Belorussian SSR, 42; Uzbek SSR, 45; Georgian SSR, 28; Azerbaydzhan SSR, 29; Armenian SSR, 9; Tadzhik SSR, 10; Turkmen SSR, 8; Kazakh SSR, 21; Kirgiz SSR, 10; Karelo-Finnish SSR, 7; Moldavian SSR, 11; Lithuanian SSR, 11; Latvian SSR, 21; and

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Estonian SSR, 3. The military services were represented by 168 delegates and guests.

More than half the participants in the congress (870 persons) were representatives of scientific research institutes of the Soviet Union; there were 532 hygienists (33.4 percent) and 926 epidemiologists (62.6 percent).

Concerning the scientific qualifications of the participants in the conference, one may judge according to the following data: there were 17 Stalin Price Laureates taking part in the proceedings of the congress; 29 Academicians, Members, and Corresponding Members of the Academy of Medical Sciences; 242 Doctors of Science, and 464 Candidates of Sciences; and 603 Participants of the Congress; 39 percent of the whole body of the congress have had 20 to 29 years of actual experience; many delegates of the congress (454 persons) were participants in the recent war; 524 participants of the congress were distinguished recipients of high government awards.

In its composition, the congress brilliantly reflected the successes of Soviet medical science in controlling disease and improving the sanitation conditions of the nation.

The resolutions adopted by the congress on all the scheduled problems must become a subject for study and guidance not only for scientific research institutes, but also for the entire sanitation and epidemiological organization of public health.

The unity of science and practice is the most important guarantee of further successes in the realization of the great and complicated goals which stand before Soviet public health in the Fourth Stalin Five-Year Plan.

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